The Obligations of a People to reſpect the Memory of their Deceaſed Miniſters, and to imitate their Faith and Converſation.

Being a

SERMON

Preached on Occaſion of the

DEATH

Of the late Reverend

Mr. *JOHN WALKER*,

AT

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SERMON

DEATH

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HEB. xiii. 7.

Remember them which have the Rule over you, who have ſpoken unto you the Word of God; whoſe Faith follow, conſidering the End of their Converſation.

IN this Chapter the Apoſtle, according to his uſual Method, cloſes his Epiſtle with an Exhortation to ſeveral Duties and Vertues of the Chriſtian Life. The Words before us have no Connection with the Context, but are intire of themſelves; and contain a particular Rule of Duty, ſetting forth the Manner in which the People ought to carry it, after the Death of their faithful Teachers. I ſay, after their Death; for though, in our Tranſlation, theſe Words, *which have the Rule over you*, ſeem to ſignify ſuch as were, at that Time, their Guides

or Rulers; yet in the Original it runs thus, *Remember your Rulers, who have ſpoken to you*, &c. So that they are here called upon to remember Perſons, who had formerly ſpoken to them, but would do ſo no more, becauſe they had finiſhed their Courſe, and had made their Exit out of Life, being come to the End of their Converſation. Beſides, their Duty to their living Paſtors is mentioned, *ver.* 17. *Obey them that have the Rule over you:* But their dead Paſtors they are required to remember. *Q. d.*

Many of your faithful Guides, who have formerly ſpoken unto you the Word of God, and laboured among you in the Word and Doctrine, are now by Death removed out of the World, and have finiſhed their Courſe well. But though your Eyes ſhall ſee thoſe Teachers no more, nor your Ears any more hear the Word of Life from their Lips; yet their Remembrance ought to be precious to you. You ſhould call to Mind what manner of Perſons they were amongſt you, and what Doctrine they preached unto you; and having ſuch Patterns before your Eyes, you ſhould continue ſtedfaſt in the Profeſſion and Practice of that Faith, which you heard and ſaw in them; being Followers of them, and walking as they have given you an Example. And the more to induce you to do this, you would do well to conſider the End

of their Converſation; *i. e.* how many of them have ſealed the Truths, which they preached, with their own Blood. For it is very probable that the Apoſtle here refers to thoſe Teachers, who had ſuffered Martyrdom for the Faith, becauſe there is an Emphaſis laid on the *End* of their Converſation; and Notice is taken of it in ſuch a Manner, as imports a Departure out of Life, in a different Way from that, in which the reſt of the World commonly go out of it. However, there is no Reaſon (as *Calvin* obſerves) why this may not be underſtood more generally of all ſuch, as hold on in the Faith to the End of their Days; and at Death, as well as all their Life-time, give a good Teſtimony to the Word and Doctrine, which they have preached: And in this Light I ſhall conſider the Place;

Firſt, Opening and illuſtrating the Duty which is recommended. And,

Secondly, Conſidering the Motive, which is made Uſe of to enforce it.

Firſt, I ſhall begin with opening and illuſtrating the Duty, which is recommended to the believing *Hebrews*; *viz.* to *Remember thoſe who had ruled over them, and ſpoken to them the Word of God, and to follow their Faith*: So that here are Two Things,

Things, which require a particular Conſideration:

I. The Character of the Perſons towards whom the Duty is to be performed. And,

II. The Particulars in which the right Diſcharge of the Duty conſiſts.

I. We are to conſider the Perſons, and their Character, to whom the Duty is owing; and they are ſuch as had ruled over the Flock; and ſpoken to them the Word of God. So that their Character conſiſts of Two Parts.

(1.) They are ſuch as had *ruled over the Flock*: So the Word is rendered in this, and in *ver.* 17. but in both Places the Marginal Reading is, the *Guides* of it. Theſe two Interpretations help to explain each other; and being put together, they give us an admirable Account of the Nature and Duties of the Paſtoral Office; for ἡγούμενοι, the Original Word, primarily ſignifies *Leaders*, *i. e.* Perſons who go before others, to guide them in the right Way. But becauſe Leaders, by Virtue of their Office, are to order and direct; therefore this Word is frequently uſed to ſignify Rulers and Governors; and is a common Word to denote all Kind

Kind of Rule and Authority; ſo that if we would know what Kind of Government is deſigned by it in any particular Place, we muſt judge of it by the Circumſtances in the Context.

Now it is the Paſtoral Rule or Government, of which the Apoſtle here ſpeaks; and, as to that, he expreſsly diſclaims all *Lordſhip*, *i. e.* Deſpotick Power or Dominion, as having no Part in it, 2 *Cor.* i. 24. *Not for that we have Dominion over your Faith; but are Helpers of your Joy.* And St. *Peter*'s Explication of it is in the ſame Manner, 1 *Pet.* v. 3. *Not as being Lords over God's Heritage; but being Enſamples to the Flock.* Now Men are Enſamples to the Flock, when they go before them in the right Way, and lead them in the Paths of Righteouſneſs: And this returns us back to the original Signification of the Word, and teaches us that the Paſtoral Rule and Government is not of that Kind, which has Lordſhip annext to it; but is of a much lower Kind, being the Government of Guides or Leaders; for which Reaſon they that exerciſe it are moſt fitly called *Paſtors*; and in the Scriptures all the principal Parts of a Shepherd's Office are aſcribed to them, and required of them; and a ſevere Woe is denounced againſt ſuch as neglect them:

Ezek.

Ezek. xxxiv. 3, 4. *Ye feed not the Flock; the Diſeaſed ye have not ſtrengthened, neither have ye healed that which was ſick, neither have ye bound up that which was broken, neither have ye brought again that which was driven away, neither have ye ſought that which was loſt; but with Force and Cruelty have ye ruled them.* On the other Hand, good Shepherds are deſcribed by ſuch Marks as are contrary to theſe: *e. g.* They feed the *Flock of Chriſt, and take the Overſight of it*, 1 Pet. v. 2. They *watch over the Souls* of the People, *Heb.* xiii. 17. And to bring the Point nearer to the original Signification of the Word, *viz.* a *Leader*; they are ſaid to *go before the Flock, and the Sheep follow them*, John x. 4. For the underſtanding of which Expreſſions you may obſerve, That it was a Cuſtom in former Times, and continues ſuch to this Day, in many foreign Parts, for the Shepherd to go before the Sheep, and for the Sheep to follow him: And if any of them were in Danger of going aſtray, he would call to them; and then they knowing his Voice, would come unto him. Such Shepherds, ſuch Rulers, ſhould the Paſtors of the Chriſtian Church be; for theſe Purpoſes their Power is given them; and in theſe Offices they are required to exerciſe it. It is Honour enough for them to be thus em-

ployed:

ployed; and a Power ſufficient to ſerve theſe Ends, is all that their Lord ever deſigned them.

For, indeed, they are only Under-Shepherds; the Character of *Chief Shepherd* being given to another, in Contradiſtinction unto them: For ſo St. *Peter* obſerves in the Words which follow the forementioned Charge, *and when the chief Shepherd ſhall appear, ye ſhall receive a Crown of Glory*, 1 Pet. v. 4. That will be the Reward of thoſe faithful Rulers and Guides, who, like good Shepherds, take the Overſight of the Flock, and carefully watch for the Souls of their People; who, by wholeſome Doctrine and Inſtruction, ſhow them the Way of their Duty; and by their own Example lead, and encourage them to the Practice of it: And if any go aſtray, and are in Danger of being loſt, they ſeek them out, and uſe all proper Means to reclaim them, that they may bring them back into the Ways of Holineſs and Peace.

(2.) They are ſuch as had *ſpoken the Word of God unto the People.* Indeed this might have been reduced to the foregoing Head; becauſe the Miniſters of Chriſt are to lead, and to guide the Flock by Inſtructions taken from the Word of God, which is *profitable for Doctrine, for Inſtruction*, &c.

making the Man of God perfect: But the Preaching of the Word is ſuch an eminent Part of their Office, that the Scriptures frequently lay a particular Streſs upon it, and repreſent the right Diſcharge of it as that which entitles them to larger Meaſures of Reſpect and Love: 1 *Tim.* v. 17. *Let the Elders, who rule well, be counted worthy of double Honour; eſpecially they, who labour in the Word and Doctrine.* And the Apoſtles have led their Followers, by their own Example, to make this their principal Care and Study. For upon Occaſion of the firſt Contentions which aroſe in the Chriſtian Church, they put off the ſerving of Tables to others, and *gave themſelves to Prayers, and the Miniſtry of the Word,* Acts vi. 4. Nay, St. *Paul* made a Diſtinction between this and Baptiſm; declaring that *Chriſt ſent him not to baptize, but to preach the Goſpel,* 1 Cor. i. 17. It is therefore a Thing becoming thoſe, who are made Rulers over the Flock, to preach the Word; to be inſtant in Seaſon, and out of Seaſon; to reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with all Long-ſuffering and Doctrine.

And they, who do this, will *not preach themſelves, but Chriſt Jeſus the Lord.* They will not follow cunningly deviſed Fables, but feed their People with the true Bread of Life; even with the Words of

ſound

ſound Doctrine, which tend to edify thoſe that hear them. Happy the People, who are in ſuch a Caſe! and the Flock, who have ſuch Rulers ſet over them! They are taught the Truth as it is in Jeſus; and are not ſpoiled through vain or deceitful Philoſophy, after the Traditions of Men, and not after Chriſt: But they are fed with ſound Knowledge, and ſo built up in the true Faith of Jeſus; whoſe Teachers are Workmen that need not be aſhamed, being thoroughly furniſhed to every good Work.

II. I proceed to conſider the Duty which is owing to ſuch Guides and Rulers, after their Departure out of this World; and that is expreſt in two Particulars, *viz.* to to remember them; and to follow their Faith.

(1.) It is the Duty of the Flock to *remember* their deceaſed Paſtors and Teachers. And the moſt obvious Signification of this Word is, that they ſhould have a Reſpect for their Name and Memory; neither ſoon forgetting them, nor lightly eſteeming them.

Among other Curſes denounced againſt the Wicked, it is ſaid, that *their Memories ſhall rot*; *i. e.* their Names ſhall ſoon be

forgotten in the Earth, and they ſhall be remembered no more. This is a juſt Recompence for their Wickedneſs; that, as they have been unprofitable Burdens to the Earth, ſo their Remembrance ſhould be blotted out, and their Name be ſoon forgotten under Heaven. But *the righteous ſhall be had in everlaſting Remembrance*; and they that have ſerved their Generation according to the Will of God, when they fall aſleep in Jeſus, ſhall ſtill live in the Minds and Memories of thoſe that ſurvive them: By living I do not mean barely, that it ſhall be remembered, that ſuch Perſons once dwelt amongſt us; but as the wiſe Man obſerves, *the Memory of the Juſt ſhall be bleſſed*; *i. e.* whenever we recollect them in our own Thoughts, or ſpeak of them to others, it will be to their Praiſe and Commendation. This is a Debt owing to all good Men, for their pious and profitable Examples.

But it is in a more eſpecial Manner due from the Flock to their departed Teachers; as to Perſons who ſtood in a very near Relation to them, and who may well be ſuppoſed to have been Helpers of their Faith, and Furtherers of their Joy. It is true, it cannot be ſaid of the beſt, or greateſt Paſtor upon Earth, that the Sheep are his own; for there is *one Sheepfold, and one Shepherd*, and all the Sheep belong to that one Shepherd:

herd: But he has in a peculiar Manner entruſted this and the other Part of his Flock to particular Guides; and thereupon that Part of it becomes their immediate Charge, and they are to take the Overſight of it, to inſtruct and guide it. Upon this Ground the Relation between them and their People ſtands: And the mutual Offices, which reſult from it, oblige the People, as to love and obey them while they live; ſo likewiſe to reſpect their Memories when they are dead. For according to the Senſe and Practice of all Mankind, the Name and Memory of departed Friends ſhould be precious in the Thoughts of their ſurviving Relatives; but in this Caſe the Obligation is ſtrengthened by ſome Things peculiar to this Relation. For faithful Paſtors have been profitable to the Souls of thoſe who ſat under their Miniſtry; their whole Work and Buſineſs having been to open the Eyes of thoſe who were in Darkneſs, and to turn the Diſobedient to the Wiſdom of the Juſt; to ſtrengthen the Weak, and to reclaim the Wandering; and building up Saints in their holy Faith and Love, to comfort them with the Conſolations of God, which are not ſmall. Thus they ſpend themſelves, and are ſpent for the Good of thoſe who are committed to their Care; and it is to be hoped, that all their Labours are not loſt upon their Hearers: But where

where they ſucceed, the Benefits, which flow from them, are ſo many and great, that they will leave the moſt infamous Brand of Ingratitude upon thoſe, who ſoon forget them, as wanting a due Reſpect to the Memory of their beſt Benefactors; eſpecially while they may (if it is not their own Fault) ſtill enjoy the happy Fruits of their Labours among them: For the good Seed which has been ſown in their Hearts will abide, after that the Heads of thoſe who ſowed it, are laid; and if it is cultivated with due Care, will ſpring up, and bear the bleſſed Fruits of Righteouſneſs, Peace, and Joy. Now how unkind a Thing will it be, for any to be ſoon unmindful of thoſe, who have left them ſuch laſting Proofs and Tokens of their Love and Care?

And from hence it is evident, that our Remembrance ſhould extend to their Doctrines as well as to their Perſons: For then only do we remember them as our Guides and Teachers, when we call to Mind the Things which we have learnt of them. *Our Fathers, where are they! and the Prophets do not live for ever?* But it would be very ſad, if the Word of the Lord, which they have preached, ſhould die with them. Indeed, there is too much Occaſion for Complaint, that in Fact it uſually does: But the Queſtion is, Whether theſe Things ought

ought to be ſo or not: And St. *Peter* has fully determined this Matter, 2 *Pet.* i. 12, and the following Verſes. *Wherefore I will not be negligent to put you always in Remembrance of theſe Things, though you know them, and be eſtabliſhed in the preſent Truth. Yea, I think it meet, as long as I am in this Tabernacle, to ſtir you up, by putting you in Remembrance.* —— *Moreover, I will endeavour, that you may be able, after my Deceaſe, to have theſe Things always in Remembrance. For we have not followed cunningly deviſed Fables,* &c.

And if, with this View, the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt ſpeak the Word of God, their People will be inexcuſable, if they ſuffer the Things which they have heard, eaſily to ſlip out of their Minds: For it was not their Deſign in preaching, to recommend themſelves, or their own Inventions, to their Hearers; but they *preached Chriſt Jeſus the Lord, and themſelves the Servants* of Souls *for Jeſus Sake*: So they preached, and ſo ſuch as received their Teſtimony believed: Therefore the Meſſage which they brought, not being their own, but his that ſent them, we are to receive and entertain it, not as having a Regard to them, but to their Great Lord, whoſe Embaſſadors they were; for they *prayed us in Chriſt's ſtead to be reconciled unto God.*

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Therefore, whether they live or die, their Words ought to ſink down into our Hearts, and there to abide, becauſe they were but Inſtruments by whom we believed; the Doctrine which we received, and the Power which wrought in us, to enable us to do ſo, were not of them, but of God. Let us therefore take heed, that we do not forget the Words, when their Mouths are cloſed which ſpoke them; leſt, by juſt Conſtruction, this ſhould be interpreted a forgetting not our Paſtors, or their Words, but his Words who ſent them: But call to Mind the Things which you have heard, and learnt of them; that when their Tongues are ſilent, their Words may live, and your Hearts may feel the Force of their Doctrines, when your Ears can hear them no more. But this leads us to the Conſideration of the other Part of the Duty owing to them; which is,

(2.) To *be Followers of their Faith.* Whoſe Faith follow.

Now this implies, that we ſhould hold faſt the Form of ſound Words, which we have heard of them, and not hunt after Novelties, or give Heed to lying Deluſions. Truth is old, and all Error is of a later Date, being a Departure from the Truth. Now the oldeſt Thing in revealed Religion

is,

is the Holy Scripture, which, for that Reaſon, as well as upon other Accounts, is the Rule of Sacred Truth. And this (as you have heard) is the Thing, which your faithful Guides taught you; for this is their Character, they *have ſpoken unto you the Word of God.* Therefore, if you would follow their Faith, go to the Law and to the Teſtimony, and there you will read the Words of Life: But when you read them, recollect, as you are able, the Truths, in which you have been inſtructed from them; reviewing the Explications, which have been given of the great and momentous Doctrines of Chriſtianity, and the important and neceſſary Duties, which from thence have been urged upon you: And abide in theſe Things; having ſo learned Chriſt, as to know that the Scriptures are the only Rule of your Faith and Manners: Therefore ſearch the Scriptures, in which you will find the Words of Life; and give not Ear to the Inventions of Men, but hold faſt that which you have heard; and, as the Apoſtle directs in the Words following my Text, *ver. 9. Be not carried about with divers and ſtrange Doctrines; for it is a good Thing that the Heart ſhould be eſtabliſhed with Grace, not with Meats, which have not profited them that have been occupied therein.* Meats are a Term uſed by the Apoſtle to denote the controverted Points

in Religion, in which the Kingdom of God does not conſiſt: For he oppoſes them to Righteouſneſs, Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt, upon this very Score, *Rom.* xiv. 17. *For the Kingdom of God is not Meat and Drink; but Righteouſneſs, and Peace, and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt.* So that the Faith, which we are required to follow, does not conſiſt in the Opinions of Men about leſſer and controverted Matters, but in the ſure, plain, and undoubted Truths of our holy Religion, which were from the Beginning, and have been delivered to us by thoſe who have ſpoken the Word of God unto us. This is expreſt by the Apoſtle in the ſtrongeſt Manner, in the Words which immediately follow my Text; *Jeſus Chriſt, the ſame yeſterday, to day, and for ever*, ver. 8. Theſe Words relate not to the Perſon, but to the Doctrine of our bleſſed Lord; and are brought in as an Argument, why we ſhould abide in his Words, even becauſe they are invariable, like their Author.

But there ſeems to be ſomething further intended in the Exhortation in the Text, which might more agreeably to the *Greek* be rendered thus, *whoſe Faith imitate.* And Faith, in the New Teſtament, is frequently uſed in ſo large a Signification, as to comprehend the Whole of our Duty, *viz.*

viz. A firm Belief of the Doctrines of the Goſpel, and the Fruit and Effect of this Belief, in a good Converſation. And that Faith here takes in the latter, is evident from the following Words, *conſidering the End of their Converſation:* From whence it appears, that the Apoſtle here ſpeaks of ſuch a Faith as ſhows it ſelf in a good Converſation, which is the proper Object of Imitation. So that the Meaning of this Direction is, That the People ought to walk as their Guides have ſet them an Example, imitating them in the Holineſs of their Hearts, and the Purity of their Converſation.

Let us not therefore forget, what Manner of Perſons they were, who have ſpoken to us in the Name of the Lord; but ſet them as Patterns before our Eyes, that we may be *Followers of them, as they alſo were of Chriſt.* Let us recollect how their *Faith wrought*, and was *made perfect by their Works; how holily and unblameably they behaved themſelves among us*, making themſelves Examples to the Flock: For (as *Calvin* remarks) it is of no ſmall Moment, that the Apoſtle in this Place propoſes to the Flock, their own Shepherds for their Imitation; becauſe they, who have begotten us in Chriſt Jeſus, ought to be reckoned in ſome Sort our Fathers. When, there-

fore, we call to Mind their Faith and Holineſs, and their Perſeverance therein to the End of their Lives, we have the more Reaſon to be moved by their Example, becauſe they ſtood in ſo near a Relation to us; and to be Followers of them in that Way, in which they led us by their Doctrine and their Lives too.

Secondly, We proceed to conſider the Motive which is made Uſe of to enforce the foregoing Exhortation; which is this, *Conſidering the End of their Converſation*: And this may denote Two Things; *viz.* The Manner in which they make their Exit out of this World; and the Iſſue and Event of Things with them in another.

I. The Manner in which they make their Exit out of this World. And here, waving that which was peculiar to the Caſe of the Perſons more immediately intended in the Text, I ſhall confine my ſelf to Two Things, more generally to be obſerved in the Death of faithful Miniſters.

(1.) They give their dying Teſtimony to the Truth of the Words which they have ſpoken; that they may confirm the Minds of others in the Belief of them.

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My Text ſpeaks of ſuch as ſealed it with their Blood: But, bleſſed be God, all are not called to this; it is enough if in their laſt Hours they give Witneſs to it with their Mouths: And yet even this can be expected only of thoſe, who at ſuch a Time have the free Exerciſe of their Reaſon: For when the Diſtemper takes that away from them, it puts it out of their Power to do any Thing either for themſelves, or for the Good of others: But where this Impediment does not lie in the Way, the Remark generally holds true; and the Argument drawn from it is of great Force. For when Death comes, it is Time for Perſons to put off all Diſguiſes, and to be very ſerious and ſincere in their laſt Words; therefore ſuch Words have always a very great Regard paid to them: And for this Cauſe, they who have many Years been employed in preaching the Word of God, are glad to lay hold on that Opportunity to ſet their Seal to it; and with their laſt Breath to ratify that, which has been the Work of their whole Life.

And how ſtrong an Inducement ſhould ſuch a Teſtimony, given at ſuch a Time, be to thoſe among whom they have laboured, to remember the Things which they have heard, and to imitate their Faith and Con-

Converſation, who ſpoke them? Since hereby they have the fulleſt Proof that they can deſire of the Certainty of thoſe Doctrines, in which they have been inſtructed; for no Man can do more to aſſure the Minds of others of his certain Perſuaſion of the Truth of what he has ſpoken, than to ſtand by it with his dying Breath, and to maintain it when he is juſt paſſing into the eternal World. Therefore they are altogether without Excuſe, who will not receive ſuch a Teſtimony; and ſo keep it in their Minds, as to form their Hearts and Lives according to the Obligations of it.

(2.) When the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt are departing, they uſually feel in their own Souls the Supports and Conſolations which Religion affords, for overcoming the Fears of Death, and the Terrors of the Grave, being inabled to meet that laſt Enemy, without Diſmay or Affrightment.

The Pſalmiſt has laid down this, as his Obſervation on the Death of good Men in general, *Mark the perfect Man, and behold the upright, for the End of that Man is Peace.* Allowances muſt indeed be made for the natural or moral Obſtructions, which in particular Caſes may prevent the Peace and Comfort of good Men, when they are dying: For the natural Temper of ſome indiſpoſes

diſpoſes them for it; eſpecially when it is heighten'd by their Diſtemper: And others may have put inſuperable Bars in their Way to it, by ſome grievous Faults, which, though God has forgiven them, yet have ſowed thoſe Seeds of Guilt and Trouble in their Minds, which cannot wholly be extirpated.

But bating theſe extraordinary Caſes, *the Righteous has Hope in his Death*; and if the uſual Lot of every juſt and upright Man is Peace, there is commonly a larger Share of it afforded to thoſe, who have been faithful Labourers in the Vineyard of their Lord; ſo that their Peace grows ſtronger, and their Joy ſwells higher, the nearer they approach to their End: Inſtead of fearing Death, they look upon it undiſmayed, and with Pleaſure ſee it advancing toward them.

And can we behold a Man lying in theſe Circumſtances, and be unmoved at the Sight! At a Time when Fleſh faileth, and the Hearts of moſt Men fail them, he is able to poſſeſs his Soul in Patience, and is not terrified at the Proſpect of any of thoſe Things that are coming upon him: He feels his Body decaying, and his earthly Tabernacle taking down: He knows his Soul muſt ſhortly be uncloathed, and enter into the World of naked Spirits: He looks back on the Life which he has ſpent, and has Comfort in the Review

Review of it; and looking forward into that which is before him, he rejoices in Hope of it. No guilty Reflections wound his Peace, nor frightful Proſpects diſmay his Soul: But the Thoughts of his Diſſolution are welcome to him, and he can paſs into the eternal World, without being exceedingly moved at his great Change; nay, has *an abundant Entrance adminiſtred to him, into the everlaſting Kingdom of his Lord and Saviour.* This is the End of his Converſation!

And who among us, upon hearing theſe Things, is not ready to join in *Balaam*'s Prayer, *Let me dye the Death of the Righteous, and let my laſt End be like his?* But ſince the only Way to obtain this Requeſt, is to live the Life of the Righteous, that we may die their Death; how ſhould the Obſervation of the latter End of our Guides and Teachers, thus departing in the Faith, and ending their Courſe with ſo much Peace and Joy, ingage us to follow their Faith, and to imitate their Converſation? That walking in the ſame Steps, we may in due Time reach the ſame quiet and happy End. But,

II. The End of their Converſation may ſignify the Iſſue and Event of Things with them in another World. They go the Way of all Fleſh: For their Bodies return to the Duſt,

Duſt, and their Spirits to God, who gave them: But there is a vaſt Diſtinction which will be made in the Condition of ſeparate Souls; and in the Place of their Abode.

We may in this Senſe interpret the wiſe Man's Words, *Prov.* x. 24, 25. *The Fear of the Wicked, it ſhall come upon him; but the Deſire of the Righteous ſhall be granted. As a Whirlwind paſſeth, ſo is the Wicked no more; but the Righteous is an everlaſting Foundation.* One of the Apocryphal Writers has given us a Kind of Paraphraſe on theſe Words, *The Hope of the Ungodly is like Duſt, which is blown away with the Wind; like a thin Froth, which is driven away with the Storm; and like as the Smoke, which is diſperſed here and there with the Tempeſt, and paſſeth away; but the Righteous live for evermore: Their Reward alſo is with the Lord, and the Care of them with the moſt High: Therefore ſhall they receive a glorious Kingdom; and a beautiful Crown from the Hand of the Lord,* Wiſdom v. 14, *&c.* This Account agrees with what the Scripture teaches us. Among many Paſſages which might be mentioned, I ſhall take Notice only of that, *Rev.* xiv. 13. *Bleſſed are the Dead, which dye in the Lord; —yea, ſaith the Spirit, that they may reſt from their Labours,*

and their Works do follow them. It is thus with the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt.

(1.) *They reſt from their Labours:* From all their Work and Labour under the Sun; and from all the Toils and Wearineſſes, all the Sufferings and Sorrows, and all the Temptations and Trials, which attended them in it. An eternal Period ſhall then be put to thoſe Burdens and Calamities, and thoſe Sighs and Tears, which are, in ſome Degree, the common Lot of all Men in this World: But (which is particular in their Caſe) they ſhall then ceaſe likewiſe from all that Work and Labour in the Word and Doctrine, which was once their Delight, and in which they were employed as long as they lived. For they ſhall no more preach the Doctrines of Salvation; no more plead with Sinners, about the Concerns of their Souls: That Work is done and over with them for ever. Time was, when they made the Offers of a Saviour, and intreated Sinners to receive him; when they ſet before them the exceeding great and precious Promiſes of the Goſpel, that they might win them over to Chriſt; and when they alarm'd them with the Terrors of the Lord, that they might frighten them out of their Sins; though, God knows, too often to little Purpoſe: But now their Preaching, their Offers,

fers, their Intreaties, their Warnings, and Expoſtulations, ſhall be repeated no more; for they have done their Work, and reſt from it: Their Mouths are cloſed in everlaſting Silence.

(2.) But *their Works follow them:* And a ſure Reward awaits them with their God. The hard Studies, and unwearied Labours, in which they waſted their Strength, and ſpent their very Lives, ſhall not be loſt: For *God will not forget their Work and Labour of Love.* It is to be hoped, that ſome of the Seed, which they ſowed, fell into good Ground, and ſo will bring forth good Fruits; and as ſuch Perſons are Seals of their Miniſtry now, they will be *their Crown of Joy and rejoycing* another Day: But *if* Iſrael *is not gathered*; if the Seed has fallen on hard and rocky Ground, which would not receive it; or it has been choaked with a Multitude of Briars and Thorns, that made it unfruitful; *yet ſhall they be glorious in the Eyes of the Lord,* and their God ſhall be their Saviour. It is a deſireable Thing in it ſelf, and to the Miniſters of Chriſt, that they may *turn many to Righteouſneſs*; for they that do ſo, *ſhall ſhine as the Stars for ever and ever:* But if this happy End is not attained, yet they ſhall not loſe their Reward; for *they are unto God, a ſweet Savour of Chriſt, in*

thoſe that periſh, as well as *in thoſe that are ſaved.*

Such will the End of the Converſation of the faithful Miniſters of Chriſt be; and in this bleſſed Freedom from Labours and Sorrows, and in this glorious Reward will their Works iſſue. See then and conſider, if there is no Force in theſe Truths, to excite you to a frequent and ſerious Remembrance of your departed Teachers; and to put you upon recollecting the Word of God, which they have ſpoken to you: For by this Means, when they are dead, you may ſtill hear them ſpeak; and enjoy the Fruits of their Labours, when they themſelves are reſting from them. Nay, if the Opinion of ſome Men is right, you may by this means increaſe their Joy and Happineſs: And it is grounded on a Suppoſition, which is contrary neither to Reaſon, nor to Scripture, *viz.* That ſuch as are turned to God by the Remembrance of their Words, after their Departure, will make an Addition to their Crown of Joy and Glory: But however that may be, to be ſure by this Means you will ſecure your own Salvation, which was the great End, at which they aimed, and at the ſame Time is your main Buſineſs, and of the laſt Conſequence to your own Souls.

Thus

Thus I have gone through my Subject; but the hardeſt and moſt ſorrowful Part is behind: *viz.* To apply it to the ſad Occaſion of this Day,

The Death of your late Reverend and Pious Paſtor.

Who for Thirty Years, and more, has been a Guide and Ruler over you in the Lord, ſpeaking the Word of God unto you. If he had not expreſsly enjoined the contrary, ſome fitter Perſon had ſtood here, to perform this laſt Office for him: But no other being permitted, it was neceſſary for me to undertake it. And that I might, as far as I could, comply with his Will, and Deſire, I have made Choice of a Subject, which has a more direct Tendency to inſtruct the Living, than to praiſe the Dead: But in the preſent Caſe, both theſe Things of Neceſſity go together. For as I could not do Juſtice to my Text, without deſcribing the Character of a faithful Guide and Teacher: So I queſtion not, but that you all have already made the Application of that part of the Subject to the Perſon of your deceaſed Paſtor, who in every Thing manifeſted ſo full and exact an Agreement with it. He knew, that it was his Buſineſs, not to lord it over you, but to be an Helper to you; therefore

therefore he took the Overſight of you, that, as a faithful Shepherd, he might watch over your Souls, and might lead you in the Ways of Holineſs: For he had a tender Regard for you, and faithfully followed the Pattern of the Great Shepherd, as it is deſcribed, *Iſa.* xl. 11. *He ſhall lead his Flock like a Shepherd; and he ſhall gather the Lambs with his Arm, and carry them in his Boſom; and gently lead thoſe that are with young.*

And that he might fulfil the Charge given to him, he laboured by his Doctrine, and Life, to ſave himſelf, and thoſe that heard him. To this End he gave all Diligence to make full Proof of his Miniſtry; inſtructing the ignorant, warning the ſecure, helping the weak, and comforting ſuch as were of a ſorrowful Heart: Even *as a Scribe inſtructed for the Kingdom of Heaven*, he *brought out of his Treaſury Things new and old.* But though he was no Stranger to the many Diſputes and Controverſies, which have rended the Church of Chriſt, and too much imbittered the Spirits of Chriſtians one againſt another; yet he did not chuſe to trouble you with ſuch Matters: But the plain and weighty Doctrines and Duties of Chriſtianity, as they lay neareſt his own Heart, ſo they were the conſtant Subjects of his Diſcourſes unto you: Theſe he ſet in ſo clear a Light,

as

as made them level to the meaneſt Capacity; and then he enforced them with ſo much Warmth, and Earneſtneſs, that nothing but an Heart hardened through the Deceitfulneſs of Sin, could reſiſt the Power with which he ſpake.

And while he preached to others, he did not neglect himſelf; but in his private Behaviour, as well as in his publick Work, he became a Pattern of good Works. *Ye are Witneſſes, and God alſo, how holily*, and peaceably, *and unblameably he behaved himſelf among you*; ſhewing forth by his Works the Truth and Power of his Faith, and walking in all good Conſcience before God and Man.

Piety towards God is the firſt Part of Religion, and the Foundation of all the reſt; and in this he was eminent: For he walked with God, delighting much in ſecret Duties, and in the Exerciſe of thoſe Parts of Religion, which lye between God, and a Man's own Soul; and by this Means he was a bright Pattern of that rare Vertue, having his Converſation in Heaven; and as a Proof and Reward of it, he enjoyed much Communion with God; and had an uncommon Freedom of Spirit, and Enlargedneſs of Heart, in his Addreſſes to the Throne of Grace.

But

But at the ſame Time he followed Peace with Men, as well as Holineſs; for Peace was the Joy of his Soul, and he abounded in Love and Charity towards all Men. I need not tell you, that he was a moſt tender Father, and a faithful Friend, and a very agreeable Companion. The Few, who knew him in any of theſe Capacities, have within themſelves a Witneſs to theſe Things; and need not that any one ſhould teſtify concerning them: But he did not confine his Charity to a few. If it were poſſible, as far as in him lay, he was for living peaceably with all Men. And in this, his Endeavours were not in vain; for he had a good Report of all Men, as well as of the Truth; and we alſo bear Witneſs, and ye know that our Witneſs is true: So that our Saviour's Remark was, in a Manner, inverted, with Regard to him; for *all Men ſpoke well of him*, and yet he was *bleſſed*: But then there was this Reaſon to be given for it, he had an univerſal Benevolence, and an extenſive Charity; which remarkably increaſed in the latter Years of his Life; ſo that one might viſibly perceive him ripening apace for Heaven, by his Improvements in that Grace, which is one main conſtituent Part of the Happineſs of the other World; and (if we may ſo expreſs it) the diſtinguiſhing Complexion of the bleſſed Inhabitants of it.

But,

But, that which crowned all his other Graces and Vertues, was his Humility; for he was mean in his own Eyes, whilſt all about him looked on him with Reſpect; and he had made a great Proficiency in learning that hard Leſſon, *in Lowlineſs of Mind to eſteem others better than himſelf.* Nay, he carried his Humility beyond the Grave: For though he was never backward to render due Praiſes to the Memory of the meaneſt Perſons after their Deceaſe; yet he expreſsly forbad any to be given to himſelf: and for that Reaſon I muſt ſtop in this Part of his Character, and enlarge no more upon it.

Such was the Man, who, for many Years, was your faithful Paſtor; but whom God has lately removed from you. For ſeveral Months before his Death, he felt in himſelf a ſenſible Decay; which was alſo, in ſome Meaſure, viſible to others, though no Body but himſelf apprehended his Caſe to be ſo dangerous, as in the Event it proved. In this drooping Condition he expreſt no Uneaſineſs at the Thoughts of a Diſſolution; but, on the contrary, he feared Life, and longed for Death. It is not I that tell you this; but his own Mouth did it in the fulleſt and moſt affecting Manner, in this very Place. You will eaſily apprehend, that I refer to

that Diſcourſe (the laſt but one which he preached) upon *Job* iii. 20. *Wherefore is Light given to him that is in Miſery, and Life to the bitter in Soul?* You may remember, that this was after a ſhort reviving in the Beginning of his Illneſs. God heard his Groans, and anſwered his Prayer; for his Diſtemper ſoon returned with greater Violence; and after one or two Intermiſſions, a ſudden Death ſeized upon him in a Manner all at once, and, in a very little Time, brought him down to the Grave.

But he had a remarkable Anſwer to his Prayers, in two Circumſtances of his Death: For he had often wiſhed, that, if it pleaſed God, he might die on the Lord's Day; and ſo (as he expreſt it) might conclude his Work, on the Day on which he begun it: And he alſo deſired to end his Days by a Diſtemper, which might not be attended with ſuch Pains, as many others endure before Death, as well as in the Agonies: And in both theſe Requeſts he was heard. For as he died on the Lord's Day; ſo his Diſtemper was of ſuch a Nature, as, in a great Meaſure, prevented his Senſe of Pain. This was the Occaſion that he took very little Notice of any about him, or of the Condition in which he himſelf lay. And dying in this Manner, it could not be expected, that he ſhould ſay many Things about his approaching

ing Change: But the little which he did ſpeak, gave a noble Teſtimony to the Power of Religion, and expreſſed the Supports and Conſolations which it adminiſtred to his own Soul: For he more than once ſaid, that he was not at all unwilling, or afraid to die, becauſe he had not his Work then to do: And (which was a great Word indeed) that he had not the leaſt Uneaſineſs in his Mind, from the Apprehenſions of another World.

Thus lived, and died this good Man! and he is gone to the Reſt, which his Soul longed for! His Work is done: Ours is yet to do! And that we may finiſh it with Joy, as he did, let us give diligent Heed, that we be found practiſing the Duties which have been recommended to us. The nearer the Relation was, in which he ſtood to any of us, the ſtronger is the Obligation lying upon us to keep up in our Minds a due Remembrance of him, and to follow his Faith. And God grant that we may all do ſo, according to the reſpective Meaſures of Duty incumbent upon us: And let every one of us treat his Name and Memory with Reſpect: Let us call to Mind the Things which we have heard of him; and continue ſtedfaſt in the Faith of that Word of God, which he ſpake to us; and Followers of that Example, which his good Converſation ſet us: For by this Means we may make his Death profitable,

able, as his Life has been; and what is our preſent Loſs, will in the Iſſue turn to our Gain: For if we are Followers of them, who through Faith and Patience inherit the Promiſes, we alſo in due Time ſhall find the Way to the ſame happy World, into which they are gone before us. *In the Way of the Righteous there is Life, and in the Pathway thereof there is no Death.*

And may the God of Peace, who brought again from the Dead the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, the great Shepherd of the Sheep, through the Blood of the everlaſting Covenant, make us perfect in every good Thing, working in us that which is well-pleaſing in his Sight. And if theſe are the gracious Purpoſes of Heaven concerning us, God will find out Inſtruments for carrying on the Deſigns of his Love towards us: Therefore we ſhould not ſorrow, as thoſe who have no Hope: Becauſe *all Fleſh is Graſs, and all the Glory of Man as the Flower of the Graſs: And the Graſs withereth, and the Flower thereof falleth away*; *i. e.* The beſt Men die, and the moſt uſeful and deſirable Miniſters of Chriſt muſt be laid in the Grave: *But the Word of the Lord endureth for ever; even that Word which they have preached unto you*; 1 Pet. i. 24, 25.

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